

L.S. Lect. notes 4A. Tang Figure Ptg.

Talk. Tang: another great, long-lasting, native-ruled dynasty. Once more, like Han, preceded by short-lived dynasty that accomplished unification but couldn't last: Sui (581-618), Tang (619-906). *nextly 3 centuries*
 T'ang T'ai-tsung (Li Shih-min) (reigned 626-649) led Chinese troops on great campaign that re-established Chinese rules over extensive empire. Put father on throne (reigned 619-626), then succeeded himself.

Confucianism makes come-back, altho' Bud. & Taoism still strong. Stable, long-lasting dynasty. Greatest poetry written then, greatest figure ptg. done. I will show you some examples, along with copies.

T'ai-tsung succeeded by Emp. Kao-tsung, reigned 649-683; then on his death his concubine Wu Tzu-t'ien, reigned 690-705: wiped out rivals, put inept son on throne, finally ruled herself.

Greatest T'ang emperor: Hsüan-tsung (called Ming-huang), ruled 712-756. His reign, especially, represents a return to humane government. Founded Imperial Academy of Letters (Han-lin Academy.) Great poets under his reign: Li Po, Tu Fu, Meng Hao-jan, others. Ch'ang-an, capital, present Hsian (Xian), was easily most cosmopolitan city on earth. Close contacts, trade, with Western

Asia and beyond (Golden Peaches of Samarkand.)

In his later years, when he was around 60, Hsüan-tsung became infatuated with wife of one of his sons, Yang Kuei-fei (Precious Consort Yang), brought her into palace as his favorite consort. Spent time disporting with her, neglected administration. (Subject of well-known poem by Po Chü-i, "The Endless Sorrow"). By mid-century her family had come to dominate court. She was close friend of Turkish general, An Lu-shan. He tried to seize power in 755. Emperor Hsüan-tsung fled into Szechwan; Yang Kuei-fei killed on the way, as troops demanded. Rebellion put down, his son took throne in Ch'ang-an, Hsüan-tsung returned. But power of T'ang broken, empire shrinks as local powers reclaim outlying regions, another period of disunity follows: called Five Dynasties period (906-960.) That was great age of ptg, however, to which I'll devote two lectures.

T'ang is another great period of Buddhist art, both sculpture and ptg; I used to devote quite a few lectures to it. Leaving out completely now, as announced at the beginning of the series.



4.1.1. Tomb of Princess Yung-t'ai (Yongtai) (died A.D. 706). 3000 69, Loehr Fig. 22-23, pp. 42-43. (Empress Wu Zitian, reigned 690-705, after taking over throne on death of Emperor Kao-tsung, wiped out members of Tang imperial family whom she feared as rivals. (We were given quite dif. stories when taken to tombs in 1973) delegation trip: PRC made her into model ruler, as they did with First Emperor of Qin. Jiang Qing took her as model. They loved all-powerful rulers, despised Confucius and his followers, whose beliefs they denounced as "secular humanism.")

Their tombs in Tang tomb complex, some 40 miles NW of Xian.

4.1.2, 4.1.3. Passageways in tomb decorated with ptgs; here, just flower ptgs, like walls of palace. Other: antechamber to tomb chamber proper, which (as I remember) has only shallow stone engravings. (Fence new).

4.1.4, 4.1.5. details from ptgs in outer chambers. Young waiting woman; eunuch? Or, more likely, girl attendant in male dress. Some cross-dressing in this period. Other: head of male attendant, eunuch? Grinning, w. bulging eyes. Much of this kind of inner energy in Tang sculpture, ptg.

4.1.6. One of wall ptgs in antechamber—most often reproduced, for good reason. Partly destroyed through damage; but preserved parts give us a revelation of greatness of Tang wall ptg, abt which we read so much in texts of the time, can see so little. Ease of movement, spacing of figures, naturalness of postures etc., all marvelous. Tang was recognized in later periods in China as great age of figure ptg for them; high points in LS came later.

4.1.7, 4.1.8. Two details: older serving woman with fan; younger one (partly) holding fly-whisk? Tang figure ptrs didn't avoid full-face, as later fig. ptrs tend to; handled it with ease, using it to catch and hold viewer's attention. Goes along somehow with whole feeling of openness, stability, in Tang culture.

4.1.9, 4.1.10. Detail of upper body, another of head, of espec. well-preserved, espec lovely young serving woman in center, holding stemmed cup? Body rendered with real volume now, well articulated. Fall of her translucent shawl over her shoulders, and over her arm, define 3-dim. forms of her figure as if effortlessly—her cylindrical neck, the way the shawl goes around it, her slightly sly smile— (Very different from European ideal of feminine beauty. Story of passing Svetlana Alpers's course postings on way back to class, Rubens nudes . . .)

With these, and with T'ang figure ptg more generally, we come to what old art historians, especially German, thought of as a "classical moment,"